

# The Red Circle

by Albert Payson Terhune

AUTHOR OF "THE FIGHTER," "CALEB CONOVER," "SYRIA FROM THE SADDLE," ETC.  
NOVELIZED FROM THE PHOTO PLAY OF THE SAME NAME BY WILL M. RITCHEY.

## SYNOPSIS.

"Circle Jim" Borden, who derives his name from an angry red birthmark on the back of his right hand, is about to be released from prison after serving his third term. It is a matter of history that one member of every generation of the Borden family has been branded with the Red Circle birthmark and that member has always been a criminal. Jim and his wayward son, Ted Borden, are the only known living representatives of the Borden line. Max Lamar, a detective, is detailed to keep an eye on "Circle Jim." Miss Travis and her mother, members of the wealthy set who are interested in the reform of ex-convicts, meet Borden as he is released. "Circle Jim" catches his son in the act of stealing. Realizing that his family is a menace to society, he enters the bedroom where Ted is sleeping and turns on the gas. Meanwhile, Lamar chances upon an underground passage where "Circle Jim" has taken refuge and in a fight Jim is killed. "The last of the Borden" and the end of the Red Circle," says Lamar. But the next day he is astonished by the sight of a woman's hand scribbled down the number on the license plate.

## SECOND INSTALLMENT

### "PITY THE POOR!"

A fox, living in a forest full of rabbits, is likely to grow fat. George Grant dwelt in a community of human rabbits, men who needed money and needed it so badly that they were ready to pay any price to get it. Grant did not grow fat on their needs. But his bank account did.

He was the city's most prosperous loan broker, which meant he was also the city's most heartless loan shark. His offices were forever crowded with needy clients. His big desk was full of tabulated pigeonholes. And every pigeonhole was stacked with a piteous array of promissory notes, of mortgages, of eight drafts, and similar sorry documents.

One day—it was the same that Max Lamar caught his fleeting glance of the Red Circle on a woman's white hand, as a closed automobile whizzed past him—George Grant got up from this famous desk in his private office, stretched his lean arms lazily, and went into the adjoining room where stood his capacious steel vault.

Entering the vault and switching on the electric light, he began to search through the tiers of compartments along the rear wall. The paper he wanted was not easy to find, and his search continued for several minutes.

At last, he discovered what he sought. Consulting the document, he made one or two notes from it on the back of an envelope; then switched off the light and turned to leave the vault.

But, instead of the sunshine from the office beyond, he faced black darkness. The vault door had been shut.

So silently had it closed that, engrossed in his search, he had not observed it was no longer open.

Grant pushed against the steel door. It did not yield to the pressure. It had been shut tight.

Grant drew in a deep breath and shouted at the top of his lungs. The vault resounded deafeningly to his belated shout. But the thick walls absorbed the sound.

Turning back into the vault and switching on the light once more, he pulled out a steel cashbox from its compartment and, using it as a bludgeon, began to hammer with desperate force on the unyielding door, punctuating his blows with shouts for help.

After an interminable time, a clerk—John Saals by name—who chanced to pass through the adjoining room,

ing near the entrance of a small park. The chauffeur was in his seat, unconcerned, as though in front of his own employer's door.

Lamar and the chief tumbled out of their car before it had fairly stopped; and they ran at top speed toward the captured limousine.

The tannoe of the limousine was empty.

Grant was dancing in fury and shaking his fist at his mildly surprised chauffeur.

"What d'ye mean by it?" he shrieked. "What'n blazes d'ye mean by it, Garvice?"

The chauffeur had been fumbling in his pocket. Now he produced a card, and sullenly handed it to his employer.

"There's your own orders," he growled.

Lamar, glancing over Grant's shoulder, saw the card was George Grant's own; and that on it, above the name, was scrawled in pencil:

O. K. Take bearer where she wishes.

"Well, I'll be—I'll be—" spluttered the bewildered Grant.

"Where is she? What became of her?" demanded Lamar.

"Which way did she go?" persisted Lamar.

"Down that path to the left. Funny business, I call it, to—"

Lamar had already started in the direction the chauffeur pointed out; and the chief and Grant ranged alongside of him as he strode along.

"We'll look down this path to the end," suggested the chief. "And then we'll separate and quarry the whole park for her. She may have left the park at the far side."

But the veiled woman in black had not left the park. She had merely left the park path and had crept into the shrubbery.

She sped along like a black wraith; nonetheless, furtive, uncanny. Once she raised her right hand to part some bushes that barred her way. The hand was small, white, infinitely graceful in contour. But on its back throbbed an angry crimson scar; outlined like an irregular ring.

Through the high bushes she crept; and into a tiny glade hemmed in by shrubbery. There she halted. Deftly

was in my vault just now, the door was shut on me and a lot of notes of people who owe me money were stolen out of my desk.

"My clerk says he saw a veiled woman go into my office. She was seen coming out again with a handful of documents bound up in a rubber band. And when I went down to my car," he continued in mounting excitement, "she'd stolen that, too. And my chauffeur—"

"What was the number?" asked the chief, taking out a pencil and drawing a scratch-pad toward him.

"The number of my car? It was 126,694."

"The device it was!" cried Lamar, dropping the license book and striding forward. Lamar produced a card and handed it to Chief Allen.

"That's the number I jotted down," he said. "The number of the car with the Red Circle woman in it."

"126,694!" read the chief.

"What's that? What's that?" demanded Grant eagerly.

Brusquely he snatched the card from the chief. It slipped from his awkward fingers as he grasped it, and fell to the floor beneath the window sill.

Grant stooped to pick it up. As he rose, his gaze fell on the busy street just outside, with its hurrying traffic on sidewalk and asphalt.

At the same moment a big automobile wriggled out of a vehicle-jam and flashed past the window. Grant gave one incredulous look, then bawled:

"There's my car! There it is, now! See!"

"Come on!" exclaimed the chief as he bolted from the room with Lamar and Grant at his heels.

At the outer entrance of police headquarters a motor-cycle policeman was dismounting.

"Follow that car!" ordered the chief. "That limousine there. The number's 126,694. Get it!"

In the alley at the side of police headquarters a departmental automobile was awaiting. The chief gave a swift command to its drowsing chauffeur, then jumped into the tonneau, Lamar and Grant piling in after him.

Some time later, they had come to a jarring standstill alongside the automobile they sought. It was stand-

she slipped out of the shapelessly enveloping black coat. The coat was lined with white satin. The woman's dress also was snow white. With quick skill, she proceeded to fold the coat inside out, in such way that no portion of the black was visible. Then she draped it carelessly over her white-sleeved arm.

Raising both hands to her head, she undid the thick black veil, took it off, rolled it into a ball and tossed it into the bushes.

A black-clad woman, shrouded in an impenetrable veil, had entered the thicket. Less than a minute later, a girl in white dress and white toque, and carrying on her arm a white wrap, emerged upon the farther path, and sauntered in leisurely fashion toward the park's opposite entrance.

Once, she glanced nervously at the back of her right hand. But at once her frown of apprehension cleared away. The Red Circle had again become invisible.

Lamar, hastening along the path, with Grant and the chief, saw a beautiful girl, all in white, coming toward him around a bend in the walk. At a glance he recognized her.

"Miss Travis!" he exclaimed, clasping the white hand she held out to him. "This is good luck! I didn't know this park was a favorite walk of yours."

"Oh, but it is!" laughed June, "I love it. It's so quiet and pretty. But I didn't expect to find a busy detective wandering dreamily about in it. I thought detectives were always—"

"Crime specialist, please, Miss Travis," interrupted Lamar. "That is, if you don't mind. If you knew how I hate that word, 'detective'—"

She became aware of his companions, who stood a pace or two distant, fuming at the delay.

"I won't detain you, Mr. Crime Specialist," she said, gayly; adding, as she moved away: "But, don't forget, you promised to call and tell me about your work."

"Did you suppose I could forget it?" he made answer. "And—may I call tomorrow afternoon? Are you going to be at home?"

"Why, yes. Please come then. Good-by."



The Office Force Crowded Around While the Cashier Unlocked the Vault.

When June reached her own home, her mother and Mary (her old nurse) were on the veranda. She hurried past them with scarce a word and went straight to her own room. There, from the front of her dress, she drew out a sheaf of papers fastened with a rubber band. The uppermost paper of the package was an official form, filled in with ink. It read:

June 12, 1915.  
Seven days from date, or—to pay George Grant ten dollars (\$10), as first installment on my loan of one hundred dollars (\$100), plus interest at the rate of 10 per cent a week. Total payment due, \$20.

(Signed) John L. Peterson.  
June Travis' fingers rifled the sheaf. Most of the papers were of much the same nature as was the first, and for varying sums, at exorbitant interest. Each document was mute witness to a tale of poverty and of the greedy advantage Grant had taken of such poverty.

Gathering up the papers, June went into her sitting room, placed a chair in front of a typewriter and began to tap away at the keys. For a full hour she wrote—a bare half-dozen lines on each sheet—addressing an envelope for each.

Without waiting to put on her hat she ran downstairs and out of the house by a rear door, to a nearby mailbox. In this she posted her stack of letters, and made her way back to her sitting room, unnoticed. After which, she once more picked up the documents stolen from George Grant's desk; crumpled them into a ball; set a match to them; held them until they were ablaze; and tossed them into the fireplace.

"There goes a sheaf of heartaches!" she sighed. "Oh, if only all poverty could be destroyed as easily!"

Mary, June's nurse, was more a servant of the Travis family than a servant. She had lived with Mrs. Travis since long before June was born; she had comforted the stricken wife when her husband died; she had loved June from the day of the winsome girl's birth.

Early next morning, while she was putting the sitting room to rights, Mary chanced to see half a charred

piece of paper lying on the hearth. She picked it up. On the unburned half of the paper, she read:

Seven days from date, or—to pay George Grant ten—third installment on my loan of fifty—plus interest at the rate—per week. Total payment due \$15—Signed Jos. Bro—

Mary puzzled over the fragment in stark perplexity. To her, it meant nothing. And she could not understand how her darling should have happened to possess such a thing or why she had tried to burn it. But as she placed the morning newspaper on the table, for June, a few minutes later, the old woman's gaze fell on these startling headlines:

VEILED WOMAN IN BLACK  
ROBS LOAN BROKER GRANT  
Notes of Clients, Owing Money, Are Missing—Thief "Borrow" Victim's Auto and Escapes.

Mary let the newspaper fall to the floor from her inert hand. Again she examined the charred notes. And now she knew what it was.

Mr. George Grant had come late to his office that morning. He was in the sort of humor that makes a poisonous snake bite itself and die.

There was but one gleam of comfort in Grant's sour heart this bright morning. And that was his belief that the men whose names were signed to the missing documents would not know of the theft.

The task of bluffing these poor delinquents promised to be absurdly easy. And presently, as he sat morbidly gloating over such scenes, Grant's first opportunity came. A name was brought in to him. Joseph Brown had called, begging for a word alone with him. Grant smiled happily.

"Tell him to come in," said Grant, gleefully, as the caller was announced. Brown came into the inner office, clad in his working clothes. Generally on such visits, he paused at the threshold and meekly waited his master's leave to advance toward the desk.

But today he walked confidently up to Grant, his tanned face one broad grin. Without troubling to say "Good morning," he handed Grant a folded letter. Then:

"That's all," he remarked. "Bye-bye, you slimy old money spider. I'm out of your dirty net—for keeps."

He turned and swaggered out of the room before the astounded Grant could so much as swear at him. The letter was typewritten and very brief. It ran:

Mr. Joseph Brown: The notes which you gave George Grant for a loan at outrageous interest rates have been destroyed. Therefore, your debt is cancelled.

One Who Pities the Poor.  
Grant was still raging, wordlessly. When Saals came in to announce one John Peterson, an elderly, stoop-shouldered man, who entered on the heels of his announcer.

"Mr. Grant," said the old man, offering the loan broker a letter. "This came by the morning mail. I thought it was only fair to show it to you."

Grant, his eyes blurred with fury, was barely able to note that this letter was a typewriter duplicate of Brown's.

"It's—it's a lie!" he stormed. "A trick! I have your notes safe in my desk here."

"I will take that chance, Mr. Grant," replied the old man, turning to go. The loan broker lurched dizzily to his feet. Just then Saals intruded again.

"Mr. Grant," said the clerk, "there's seven or eight more people in the outer office; all of them with typewritten letters from—"

"Kick them out!" howled Grant. In five minutes, he was bustling into a downtown office whose outer door-glass bore the legend:

"Max Lamar, crime specialist."

"Mr. Lamar," began Grant as soon as he could get his breath. "That veiled woman has clinched her theft by this—and this—"

slamming the Brown and Peterson letters on the desk in front of Max. "And by a lot more of the same kind. Get her for me. Get her. To blazes with the expense! Get her!"

June Travis emerged from her bedroom, heavy-eyed from sleeplessness, and in pretty negligee, entered her sitting room. Mary was standing there, awaiting her. June, as she had done since babyhood, went over to kiss the old woman good morning. Then, and only then, did she notice that Mary made no move to meet her as she came forward; that she did not speak, and that her face was blank with grief.

"Why, Mary?" cried the girl, "what is it? What's the matter? Is Mother—"

Mary cut short the queries by thrusting forward the charred promissory note.

"This is the matter," she said grimly. "Dearie, you must tell me what it means."

June stifled a little cry of fear; then impulsively snatched the burnt paper from the nurse's hand and made as though to hide it.

"Tell me, dearie," murmured the old woman. "Tell me all about it. You are unhappy and you've gotten into mischief. Tell Mary, little girl."

"I think I've gone mad," said June. "I can't understand it any other way. I can't account, any other way, for the fearful power that has taken hold of me, from time to time, this past day or two."

"It began just the other day," she whispered. "All in a flash. You remember, I told you about my going to the prison with mother, the day 'Circle Jim' Borden was released—and the way he repulsed me when I spoke to him?"

"Yes! Yes!" assented Mary, her

lined face paling and an unaccountable shudder convulsing her slender old body.

"Well," resumed June, "just a few hours after I left the prison, all at once I had the strangest sensation. It seemed to start in my brain and go all over me. It was as if something had snapped, in my soul. I can't explain it. And the strangest impulses came surging through my mind. I—I felt like a criminal!"

"Dearie!"

"I did. I felt as a criminal must feel. I felt a craving to commit crime; a love for its perils, a hideous



Mary Was Standing There, Awaiting Her.

crafty wit at escaping the law's punishment. It was—it was—"

"Little girl! Little girl!" soothed Mary, as a sob choked June's husled voice.

"It's true," persisted June, miserably. "I am a criminal. Listen! I had heard from so many poor people about George Grant and the way he bled them, that I had always hated the man. I had longed to rescue some of his miserable victims—the people he kept poor by wringing outrageous interest money from them. But I never had thought it would be in my power to do it."

"Then, in a moment, when this queer criminal impulse attacked me, I saw how I could punish George Grant and free some of his slaves. It came to me as an inspiration. I put on my black motor coat—the white-lined one there in the closet—and a black veil. I went to his office and managed to get in. He was in the vault. I shut the vault door. Then I rummaged through his desk; got all the notes I could lay my hands on and came away."

"Oh!" gasped Mary.

"Then," pursued June, "the same strange impulse made me scribble on one of his cards on the desk an order to his chauffeur. I made him take me away in Mr. Grant's car. I knew if I went on foot I might be traced."

"Oh, my dear!" Mary cried, moaned the horrified old woman. "And you did all this? You, the sweet, honest little girl I—"

"Yes," sobbed June, "isn't it horrible? I can't understand it any more than you can, now that the mania has left me. It is as though some stranger had done it. I can't realize it was I. Why, I stole—I lied—I forged—I, June Travis who have always been so intolerant when I heard of other people being tempted to do such things. Mary! Tell me, what am I to do?"

Her voice broke in a wall. She sobbed uncontrollably on her nurse's breast. The old woman, dumfounded, grief-stricken, sought nevertheless to calm her as best she could.

"We must never tell anyone," decreed Mary at last. "Not a soul on earth. We must keep it a secret, just between us two. I'd give my life, dearie, sooner than let any harm come to you. And it shan't. Mary'll protect her little girl. But if other folks should suspect—"

"And," broke in June, "I haven't told you the worst part of it, yet."

"Is—is there more?" quivered Mary. "Oh, don't say there's worse yet!"

"There is," June returned. "That day—that day when I felt something snap in my soul, I felt a burning sensation on the back of my right hand. I looked and—oh, it has come and gone, there, off and on, ever since! It is like some hideous birthmark. It isn't there this morning, but—"

She looked at the back of her hand, she spoke; and cried aloud in sudden despair.

"Is there again?" she wept. "See? And I had hoped it had gone away forever."

She held up her right hand. On its snowy surface glowed a crimson ring, like an evil star. At sight of it, Mary sprang to her feet in mortal fright.

"The Red Circle!" babbled the old woman, her voice hoarse and indistinct with horror. "The Red Circle! After all these years! The Red Circle! Oh, God, help us! God, help us all! The curse! The Red Circle!"

(END OF SECOND INSTALLMENT.)

## SIR HERBERT TREE IS NEW FILM CAPTURE

London, Eng.—Announcement has just been made of the engagement to be signed by Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, the lessee of His Majesty's Theatre, by which the Triangle Film Corporation of New York will be enabled to market films for its service depicting plays in which the English actor will appear. Sir Herbert sails for New York within a month's time and on his arrival there will attach his signature to the papers by which he will obligate himself for a period of thirty weeks.

The sum to be paid the actor knight is said to be one of the largest ever offered to a dramatic star, cash in excess of \$100,000 being the remuneration agreed upon. On his arrival in America Sir Herbert will decide whether he is to enter at once upon his motion picture activities, or fill a comparatively short theatrical engagement in a few of the larger cities of the United States. The plays in which he is to appear will be produced under the supervision of David W. Griffith, the producer of the spectacle, "The Birth of a Nation," now running in London. It is said that one of the initial presentation will be Shakespeare's "Tempest," which will offer exceptional opportunities from a film standpoint, and at the same time give Sir Herbert Tree full scope for his artistic talent.

The contract with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree has been tentatively arranged as described above, the negotiations having been conducted by Mr. J. McKeon on behalf of Mr. Griffith. The whole matter has been put through by cable, and Sir Herbert Tree has signified his readiness to sign the contracts immediately upon his arrival in New York.

May Appear in "The Tempest." Mr. McKeon, in discussing the arrangement with the English actor, said:

"Nothing much can be said save that on behalf of Mr. Griffith I entered into negotiations with Sir Herbert, making him a definite proposition to appear in such plays as might be mutually agreeable for a period of thirty weeks. In two messages the sum agreed upon was arrived at, and the decision to complete the contract on his arrival in New York agreed upon."

"While the London report mentions 'The Tempest' I have no personal knowledge that this will be a part of Mr. Griffith's plans. I think no one but himself has any accurate idea of the type of production that he will invite Sir Herbert Tree to appear in. Obviously, an arrangement of such character as this, where two men of such importance are concerned, must leave much for decision upon the ground, and at a time when the plans are actually in preparation. The importance of the engagement can hardly be over-rated, in my estimation, and I am quite sure the patrons of high class motion picture drama in all parts of the world will welcome this opportunity of seeing the great Englishman in such roles as he is best suited to, and in which, perhaps, he has already appeared upon the stage to such advantage."

Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's engagement is now being classed as of vital importance to the welfare of the motion picture industry, as indicative of the type of presentation the Triangle Film Corporation is offering its patrons in all parts of the world. While it has not been contended that a great stage star is necessarily a great screen actor, the fact of his presence in such environment, and the advertising value it gives to the release in which he will appear must of necessity have an elevating effect upon film drama as viewed from the public's standpoint, in the opinion of men accustomed to the judging of artistic values. It is understood that the Fine Arts Studio stock company is to support Sir Herbert, and that if "Tempest" is done Lillian Gish and Mary Marsh will appear prominently in the feminine roles.

MAKE IT EVEN

A street car inspector was watching the work of a new conductor. "Here, Foley," he said, "how is this? You have ten passengers and only nine fares have been rung up."

"Is that so?" asked Foley. Then, turning to his passengers, he yelled, "There's wan too many on this car. Git out, wan of yez."

What for—to write an epic? queried Bingletop.

"Epic nothing," retorted Dubbleigh. "To smite the blooming lyres."

Read the Classified Ads.

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The Veiled Woman.

Close to the vault, heard a muffled tapping and paused to investigate. He called the cashier, who alone of the employees, knew the vault's combination. The whole office force gathered inquisitively around the cashier as he unlocked and threw open the door. Out reeled